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## **President Shelly Takes Protection of Sacred Sites To United Nations**

**GENEVA, Switzerland**—Before the United Nations today, President Ben Shelly addressed the Human Rights Council, which had more than 130 leaders, representing their country. President Shelly asked them, for their assistance in protecting the San Francisco Peaks.



President Shelly speaks of protecting the San Francisco Peaks, before the United Nations.

“The San Francisco Peaks are sacred to the Navajo people,” said President Shelly. “Our culture, religion, and history are rooted to the sacred peaks. For years we have fought to protect them. The American legal system has failed the Navajo Nation in our attempts to preserve the peaks from continued abuse.”

President Shelly asked the United Nations to compel the United States to review its policies and actions as it relates to sacred sites, and to revoke the permit the U.S. Forest Service has authorized for the use of recycled water for recreational purposes on the San Francisco Peaks.

Professor James Anaya, Special Rapporteur included the violation of human rights in a communication sent January. In that, a response in 60 days was requested but the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has not received a response.

“Our spiritual leaders jointly requested the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission to file a formal complaint to Professor Anaya regarding this injustice,” said the President. “It is a violation of Navajo Human Rights.” The President’s delivery before the Human Rights Council of the United Nations is the first address before the entire body.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, and contains 30 articles. Article 18 is the freedom of “thought, conscious and religion.”

“As Navajo people we live in harmony with the animals, birds, and all living creatures,” the president said. “The United States must respect international law regarding the treatment of indigenous people, especially when concerning the basic human rights of the original inhabitants of its own country.”

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Following President Shelly's statement to the United Nations, Special Rapporteur James Anaya thanked the president, and concluded he is committed to the institutional standards. The special rapporteur will conclude his report to the United Nations Human Rights Council for adoption.

The report to the United Nations filed states, "...based on human rights treaties to which the United States is a party to and the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, require adequate consultation and close scrutiny for any action that affects the sacred sites and religious practices of indigenous peoples."



President Shelly and James Anaya, Special Rapporteur

Today's report at the United Nations can be found on the United Nations website at:  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=11407&LangID=E>

A follow up press release with more details on the outcome of the United Nation's action, will be divulged as new information develops.

President Shelly returns to Washington, D.C. and will meet with the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Head Start, and congressional offices on Friday.

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